

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6894

INFO ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO VIA POUCH

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SUBJECT: COMMENTARY ON LATEST CONGRESSIONAL LETTER REGARDING MEXICO

REF: A. MEXICO 10428 B) MEXICO 7003

1. AS PROMISED PARA 3, REF A, WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON THE NINE POINTS OF CONCERN EXPRESSED BY 76 CONGRESSMEN IN A LETTER TO PRESIDENT FORD. IN GENERAL, THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF FACTUAL BASIS TO THE ACCUSATIONS AND WE TOO HAVE BEEN CONCERNED OVER THE OFTEN ASSERTIVELY ANTI-US POSTURE OF THE ECHEVERRIA GOVERNMENT. WHERE WE DIFFER MOST FUNDAMENTALLY FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL LETTER'S INTERPRETATION IS IN ITS COMBINING OFTEN UNRELATED EVENTS, TAKING THEM OUT OF THEIR DOMESTIC CONTEXT, AND SEEING A PATTERN ANALOGOUS TO CUBA UNDER CASTRO.

2. AMNESTY

SEE REF B. THE MEXICAN COMMUNIST PARTY, ALONG WITH OTHER LEFTIST GROUPS, DID PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN THE EVENTS WHICH LED UP TO THE OCTOBER RIOTS. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE AND PERHAPS EVEN PROBABLE THAT SOVIET AGENTS HAD CONTACT WITH
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PERSONS PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDENT MOVEMENT. BUT TO CHARACTERIZE THOSE AFFECTED BY THE AMNESTY LEGISLATION AS "SOVIET AGENTS" SERIOUSLY OVERSTATES THE MATTER. AND TO IMPLY THAT THE GOM UNDER ECHEVERRIA WOULD IGNORE PROVEN

SOVIET INVOLVEMENT OVERLOOKS THE EXPULSION OF FIVE SOVIET DIPLOMATS FROM MEXICO IN 1971, WHEN IT WAS SHOWN THAT MEXICANS TRAINED IN GUERRILLA TACTICS IN NORTH KOREA TRANSITED THE USSR, AND OTHER MORE RECENT THOUGH UNPUBLICIZED INCIDENTS.

3. FOREIGN COMMUNISTS AND RADICALS IN GOM POSITIONS:
ALSO SEE REF B. ALTHOUGH WE BELIEVE THIS ASSERTION GROSSLY EXAGGERATES THE POLICY ROLE WHICH CHILEANS AND OTHER ASYLEES ARE PLAYING HERE, THE PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT GIVEN TO FOREIGN ASYLEES IN A TIGHT JOB MARKET HAS CAUSED WIDESPREAD RESENTMENT OF THEIR PRESENCE, BUT ON ECONOMIC AS WELL AS POLITICAL GROUNDS. IN FACT, ASYLUM BEING GRANTED TO CURRENT WAVE OF URUGUAYAN EXILES IS STRICTLY TEMPORARY, THE GOM MAKING CLEAR THEY WILL HAVE TO FIND A PERMANENT HAVEN ELSEWHERE.

4. EXTENDING CONTACTS WITH SOCIALIST BLOC COUNTRIES:
THIS HAS BEEN A MAJOR GOAL OF THE ECHEVERRIA ADMINISTRATION AND DEPARTMENT SHOULD NOT UNDERPLAY THE SIGNIFICANCE WHICH THE ECHEVERRIA ADMINISTRATION ATTACHES TO THIS OBJECTIVE. ITS BASIC PURPOSE IS TO DIVERSIFY DIPLOMATIC, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL CONTACTS TO LESSEN ITS OWN FELT DEPENDENCE UPON THE UNITED STATES. BUT THESE CONTACTS ARE BEING EXPANDED ACROSS THE BOARD, WITH GREATER EMPHASIS ON RELATIONS WITH THE THIRD WORLD THAN WITH THE SECOND.

5. ATTRIBUTING TERRORISM TO (RIGHT WING) PROVOCATION:
THE ECHEVERRIA TACTIC OF DOWNPLAYING TERRORIST ACTS AS THE ACTIONS OF "MISGUIDED YOUTHS" OR AS THE WORK OF THE REACTIONARY RIGHT OR EVEN "FOREIGN FORCES" (READ CIA) IS A PHENOMENON WHICH HAS BOTHERED THE EMBASSY AND THE DEPARTMENT. (ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, MOST RECENTLY AFTER THE ABORTED ATTEMPT TO EITHER KIDNAP OR ASSASSINATE THE SISTER OF PRESIDENT-ELECT LOPEZ PORTILLO, THE AMBASSADOR HAS MADE STATEMENTS DENYING ANY UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT.)
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HOWEVER, THIS REFLEX ACTION BY THE GOM SHOULD UNDERSTOOD IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNAL MEXICAN POLITICS. AS THE PARTY OF MEXICO'S "CONTINUING REVOLUTION", THE INSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTIONARY PARTY, OF WHICH THE MEXICAN PRESIDENT IS THE DE FACTO HEAD, HAS A POLITICAL DIFFICULTY IN ADMITTING THAT OPPOSITION TO THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT EXISTS ON THE LEFT. AS THE ONLY "TRULY REVOLUTIONARY" GROUP IN MEXICO, THE SYLLOGISM GOES, ANY VIOLENT OPPOSITION IS IPSO FACTO COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY, AND THEREFORE ORIGINATES FROM PEOPLE WHO, WHILE THEY MAY CLAIM TO BE REVOLUTIONARY, ARE REALLY REACTIONARY. THE ECHEVERRIA ADMINISTRATION HAS ALSO UTILIZED SUCH INCIDENTS TO SUGGEST THAT FOREIGN

POWERS (READ US) ARE TRYING TO PRESSURE MEXICO TO CURTAIL ITS INDEPENDENT FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICY. HERE AGAIN, THE INTENDED AUDIENCE IS THE GOM/PRI'S DOMESTIC CONSTITUENCY, THE ONLY VIABLE POLITICAL POSTURE FOR A MEXICAN POLITICAL FIGURE BEING ONE OF ASSERTIVE INDEPENDENCE AND EVEN DEFIANCE VIS-A-VIS THE UNITED STATES. NONE OF THIS RHETORIC, HOWEVER, SHOULD IN OUR JUDGEMENT BE INTERPRETED TO MEAN AN ACTIVE SYMPATHY TOWARDS THE RADICAL LEFT.

IN FACT, AS WE HAVE REPORTED ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, THE GOM SINCE OCTOBER 1973 HAS TAKEN A TOUGH LINE AGAINST TERRORISTS, PUBLICLY REFUSING TO NEGOTIATE WITH TERRORISTS AND OCCASSIONALLY (WE BELIEVE) VIOLATING MEXICAN LAW IN ITS COUNTER-TERRORIST ZEAL. THE GOM HAS MADE HEAVY INROADS INTO THE 23RD OF SEPTEMBER COMMUNIST LEAGUE AND IN DEC 1974 FINALLY KILLED LUCIO CABANAS, THE LEADER OF A RURAL GUERRILLA GROUP.

6. HUMAN SETTLEMENTS LAW: SEE REF B AND PREVIOUS POLITICAL REPORTING ON THIS SUBJECT. IN THE THREE MONTHS SINCE WE FIRST RESPONDED ON THIS SUBJECT, THE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS LAW (GREATLY MODIFIED, IN ANY CASE) HAS NOT BEEN AN ISSUE HERE.

7. SINGLE, OBLIGATORY, "CASTROITE" TEXTBOOK: NOTHING FURTHER HAS OCCURRED ON THIS ISSUE SINCE WE RESPONDED IN REFTTEL B, ALTHOUGH CONCERN OVER ITS THIRD WORLD SLANT UNDOUBTEDLY PERSISTS.
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6895

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8. A) ANTI-US DEMAGOGUERY: MUCH OF THE DEMAGOGUERY IS PROMPTED BY INCIDENTS SUCH AS THOSE DISCUSSED IN PARA 5 ABOVE. OTHER OF IT IS RELATED TO DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES WHICH MEXICANS PERCEIVE AS UNHEALTHY FOR THEIR SOCIETY. AS A DEVELOPING NATION ON THE BORDERS OF THE RICHEST, MOST INNOVATIVE AND RAPIDLY CHANGING SOCIETY ON EARTH, MEXICO FEELS THE CONSTANT PRESSURE OF BEING OVERWHELMED CULTURALLY, ECONOMICALLY AND POLITICALLY. AS A NATION WHICH LOST HALF ITS TERRITORY TO THE UNITED STATES AND WHICH WAS INVADDED IN THIS CENTURY BY THE UNITED STATES, MEXICO AND MEXICANS HAVE RESENTMENTS WHICH ARE EASILY BROUGHT TO THE SURFACE. ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE UNITED STATES IS IN MANY WAYS SIMILAR TO THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH THE UNITED STATES HAD WITH GREAT BRITAIN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, WHEN TWEAKING THE BRITISH LION'S TAIL WAS OUR NATIONAL PASTIME. STILL OTHER ANTI-US RHETORIC TO WHICH THE LETTER MAY BE REFERRING IS CRITICISM OF TRANSNATIONALS AND THAT WHICH MEXICANS HAVE EXPRESSED IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS. THE FORMER HAS NOT HELPED THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE AND THE LATTER HAS BEEN A PATTERN OF OFFICIAL BEHAVIOR WHICH DIRECTLY AND ADVERSELY

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AFFECTS OUR MULTILATERAL INTERESTS AND IS A SOURCE OF CONCERN. BUT WE THINK THE CONGRESSIONAL LETTER MISSES THE POINT IN ITS INTERPRETATION OF THIS AS AN ATTITUDE FAVORING SOVIET BLOC INTERESTS. IT IS INSTEAD POINTEDLY THIRD WORLD ORIENTED: ON SOME EAST-WEST ISSUES WE OFTEN STILL OBTAIN MEXICAN SUPPORT.

B) THE CALL TO CLASS WARFARE-THIS COULD REFER SPECIFICALLY TO EITHER A STATEMENT MADE LAST OCTOBER BY A LEFTIST MEXICAN WRITER WHO SUGGESTED THAT IF THE AGRARIAN REFORM WAS BETRAYED THAT MEXICAN CAMPESINOS WOULD INEVITABLY ARM THEMSELVES, OR TO AN APRIL 4 STATEMENT BY PRI PRESIDENT MUNOZ LEDO THAT PERHAPS IT WAS TIME FOR WORKERS TO "TAKE DIRECT ACTION" TO PREVENT UNPATRIOTIC MEXICANS FROM BETRAYING THE NATIONAL INTEREST. BOTH STATEMENTS WERE MADE IN THE CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL DISPUTES OF THE MOMENT AND NEITHER PERSON HAS REITERATED SUCH CALLS TO "CLASS WARFARE". THE LATTER STATEMENT IN PARTICULAR WAS WIDELY CONDEMNED BY THE GENERALLY LEFTIST ORIENTED MEXICAN PRESS, AND BY PROMINENT POLITICAL FIGURES. IT COULD ALSO REFER MORE GENERALLY TO THE PRESIDENT'S ATTRIBUTING DOMESTIC SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ILLS TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR, TO HIS OFTEN STINGING CRITICISM OF MEXICO'S

WEALTHY CLASSES' IMITATION OF US LIFE STYLES, AND DICTMENT OF THE RURAL LARGE LANDHOLDERS FOR STAGNATION IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY. THERE IS NO DOUBT HIS RHETORIC IN THIS AREA HAS ACCENTUATED CLASS FEELING IN MEXICO TO A DEGREE AND IT IS NOT EASY TO EXPLAIN WHY HE HAS FELT CONSTRAINED TO ADOPT SUCH A POSTURE EXCEPT THAT HE OBVIOUSLY WISHES TO SEE HIMSELF AS THE CHAMPION OF THE COMMON MAN. BUT THE EMPHASIS GIVEN IN THE LOPEZ PORTILLO CAMPAIGN TO THE THEME "LA SOLUCION SOMOS TODOS" IS PROBABLY A RECOGNITION ON JLP'S PART OF THE NEED TO TONE DOWN THIS ASPECT OF THE ECHEVERRIA ADMINISTRATION.

9. INACTION ON LAND INVASIONS: SEE REF B. LAND INVASIONS HAVE CONTINUED IN MEXICO AND CLEARLY PRESENT THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT WITH A DILEMMA. IT CANNOT APPEAR TO BE OPPOSED TO LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES BY LANDLESS PEASANTS, A MAJOR CAUSE OF THE 1910 REVOLUTION, BUT IS HAS PRACTICALLY RUN OUT OF LAND AVAILABLE FOR REDISTRIBUTION.
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FURTHER ATOMIZATION OF LAND HOLDINGS AND UNCERTAINTIES IMPEDING INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE ARE INIMICAL TO ITS NEED TO BE SELF-SUFFICIENT IN FOODSTUFFS. WHILE IT IS RELUCTANT FORCIBLY TO REMOVE SQUATTERS FROM ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED LAND, FOR FEAR OF VIOLENCE AND FOR THE ABOVE STATED POLITICAL REASONS, IT DOES SEEM TO BE DOING WHAT IT CAN TO DISCOURAGE LAND INVASIONS. ONE CURRENT RESTRAINT ON MORE FORCEFUL ACTION IS THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF THIS PERIOD OF TRANSITION BETWEEN THE ECHEVERRIA AND LOPEZ PORTILLO ADMINISTRATIONS. THE GOM'S SOMEWHAT CAUTIOUS HANDLING OF THE LAND INVASION SITUATION IS IN PART DUE TO ITS WISH TO GET THROUGH THIS PERIOD WITHOUT ANY SERIOUS UNREST IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. THERE HAVE BEEN INSISTENT SUGGESTIONS THAT OFFICIALS WITHIN THE AGRARIAN REFORM MINISTRY (SRA) HAVE HAD A DIRECT HAND IN FOMENTING RURAL UNREST. WE FIND IT HARD TO CREDIT THESE RUMORS BECAUSE THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE ANY PLAUSIBLE MOTIVE FOR THESE OFFICIALS TO AGGRAVATE PROBLEMS THEY HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOLVING. THE EXPLANATION MOST FREQUENTLY OFFERED IS THAT THE SRA IS A LEFT-WING MINISTRY THAT WANTS TO SEE THE LAND DISTRIBUTION SPEEDED UP AND ORGANIZE LAND INVASIONS AS A MEANS OF PRESSURE TOWARDS THIS END. THERE IS SOME TRUTH TO THESE STORIES, BUT THEY ARE PROBABLY OVERDRAWN. MORE LIKELY, SPEECHES BY THE PRESIDENT AND OTHERS WHICH IN THEIR EYES HAVE BEEN INTENDED TO BALANCE THEIR CONDEMNATIONS OF ILLEGAL LAND SEIZURES WITH A REAFFIRMATION OF THE GOM COMMITMENT TO LEGITIMATE LAND REDISTRIBUTION HAVE FREQUENTLY AROUSED LANDLESS CAMPESINOS TO TAKE MORE LAND. ONE GOVERNOR OF A RURAL STATE COMMENTED TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT AS SOON AS HE HAD THINGS QUIETED DOWN IT SEEMED THE PRESIDENT

GAVE ANOTHER PRO-AGRARIAN REFORM SPEECH WHICH STARTED
THE INVASIONS ALL OVER AGAIN.

10. COLLECTIVIZATION EFFORTS: ALTHOUGH GOM STATEMENTS
DO USE THE TERM COLLECTIVIZATION, WHAT IT IS TRYING TO
DO IN THIS AREA MIGHT BE MORE ACCURATELY RENDERED INTO
ENGLISH BY "COOPERATIVIZING". UNDER THE EJIDO SYSTEM
REINSTITUTED AND STRENGTHENED BY THE 1910 REVOLUTION, THE
GOM STILL RETAINS TITLE OF PUBLICLY OWNED LANDS BUT
LEASES THEM IN PERPETUITY TO FARMERS; THE PLOTS ARE NOT SALEABLE
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AND CANNOT BE MORTGAGED WITHIN THE MAJORITY OF EJIDOS, IN
CONTRAST TO THE ORIGINAL INTENTION, INDIVIDUAL FAMILIES FARM THEIR
OWN SMALL PLOT OF LAND AND HAVE LIMITED ACCESS TO CREDITS. THIS
HAS HAD THE EFFECT OF ATOMIZING LAND HOLDINGS, MAKING THE ACHIEVE-
MENT OF ECONOMIES OF SCALE AND GREATER PRODUCTIVITY DIFFICULT.
WHAT THE GOM HOPES TO ACCOMPLISH IS THROUGH THE INPUT OF BETTER
ORGANIZATION, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, CREDITS, TRAINING,
EQUIPMENT, ETC., TO MAKE THESE ALREADY EXISTING EJIDOS
MORE PRODUCTIVE. WE HAVE NOT SEEN ANY INDICATION,
HOWEVER, THAT THE TALK ABOUT COLLECTIVIZING INDICATES
THAT THE GOM IS HEADED TOWARDS THE DESTRUCTION OF
PRIVATELY OWNED LANDS, WHICH ARE ALSO PROTECTED BY THE
CONSTITUTION.

11. AS WE ARE REPORTING IN A SEPARATE CABLE, THE PRESI-
DENT'S PRIVATE REACTION TO THIS LATEST LETTER INDICATES
MORE CONCERN THAN HIS PUBLIC COMMENTS SHOW AND HE IS
ANXIOUS TO HAVE THE CHARGES ANSWERED IN THE US BOTH PUBLICLY AND
PRIVATELY-THE LATTER POSSIBLY THROUGH A CONFIDENTIAL MESSENGER TO
REPRESENTATIVE MACDONALD. WE SHOULD BE DISCRETELY HELPFUL BUT
NOT OVERREACT* WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK THAT ON THIS
OCCASION WE SHOULD TRY TO LET THE GOM PROVIDE MUCH OF ITS OWN
DEFENSE AND THUS WORRY A BIT ABOUT THE EFFECT WHICH ITS RHETORIC
IS HAVING ON THE SECTOR OF US OPINION REPRESENTED BY THE
SIGNERS OF THE LETTER.

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